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Viewing cable 06BEIRUT2469, TFLE01: SINIORA SAYS HE IS READY TO REQUEST AN

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| Reference ID | Created | Released | Classification | Origin |
|------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 06BEIRUT2469 | 2006-07-25 16:17 | 2011-08-30 01:44 | CONFIDENTIAL//NOFORN | Embassy Beirut |

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SUBJECT: TFLE01: SINIORA SAYS HE IS READY TO REQUEST AN
INTERNATIONAL STABILIZATION FORCE

BEIRUT 00002469 001.2 OF 002

Classified By: Ambassador Jeffrey D. Feltman for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)
)

SUMMARY

1. (C/NF) In a 7/25 meeting, Prime Minister Siniora, after much prodding, told the Ambassador that he was ready to make a public call for the deployment of an international stabilization force in southern Lebanon. (He said he would do so at a 7/26 Core Group conference in Rome.) He urged that the USG help identify functions for the force that would make it appear more "palliative" within Lebanon -- civil affairs functions, for example. While there was still "a lot of convincing" to do in making the case for such a force, Siniora was optimistic that Speaker of Parliament Nabih Berri was ready to "engage" on it if Shebaa Farms was an explicit part of the package. End summary.

SINIORA WILL MAKE THE CASE
FOR NEW INTERNATIONAL FORCE

2. (C/NF) After a complex shell game managed by Prime Minister Siniora's staff, in which the Ambassador and emboff, the Saudi Ambassador, Hamas representative Oussama Hamdan, pro-Hizballah Labor Minister Trad Hamadeh, and Lebanese Forces leader Samir Ja'ja' were shuffled in and out of Siniora's office in a way that, for the most part, kept them from running into one another in the hallway, the Ambassador and emboff called on Siniora on July 25.

3. (C/NF) In the meeting, the Ambassador followed up the Secretary's visit the previous day by asking Siniora -- who

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was joined by his advisors Mohamad Chatah and Rola Nouredine -- whether the Lebanese government could make a public call for deployment of an international stabilization force in southern Lebanon. While the mandate of such a force -- unlike UNFIL, which it would replace -- would have to address Hizballah disarmament, the Lebanese government could make its request in terms of what it has been calling for since the current crisis began, such as protection of the local population, the Ambassador suggested.

4. (C/NF) After much prodding and thinking outloud, Siniora eventually said that this could be done, although expressed in terms of "what Lebanon needs." Later in the conversation, he told the Ambassador that he would insert a call for an international stabilization force in his prepared remarks for the July 26 Core Group meeting in Rome. In the meantime, it would help to create functions for the force that would make it more "palliative." This might include civil affairs functions that benefited the local population.

STILL "A LOT OF CONVINCING" TO DO

5. (C/NF) Siniora said that there is still "a lot of convincing that we have to do" in making the case for an international stabilization force. He had been "trying to tell everyone" that such a force could help deliver much-needed humanitarian assistance, for example. He described Speaker of Parliament Nabih Berri -- the most prominent non-Hizballah politician in the Shia community -- as "ready to engage" on the issue; Berri simply needed some "latitude." In his approach to Berri, Siniora was emphasizing the risks Lebanon faced if it did not proceed, and the advantages -- to Lebanon as well as to Berri specifically -- that could be realized if it did.

ONE "PACKAGE" WITH SHEBAA FARMS

16. (C/NF) To make an international stabilization force more palatable within Lebanon, Siniora said, it was necessary to include it in a "package" that was widely recognized as "good" and "necessary." This made it essential to include a resolution of the Shebaa Farms in any such "package." This was a particularly important element in winning Berri's support. Outside Lebanon, it was necessary to attain unanimity on the UN Security Council on the force's mandate. Finally, it was necessary to assemble those countries that

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could apply pressure on Iran and Syria, the likely spoilers. Those countries were Russia, China, Turkey, and Pakistan, he said.

POSITIVE ABOUT U.S. APPROACH

17. (C/NF) Siniora expressed approval of Secretary Rice's approach to finding a sustainable end to ongoing Hizballah-Israeli hostilities. Siniora described it as a realization that the "time to deal with symptoms is over." In its place, there was now U.S. movement towards an approach addressing the "causes" of the current crisis, Siniora said.
FELTMAN